

G.M. MATHEWS

Report
of an
Episcopal Visit
to
Porto Rico

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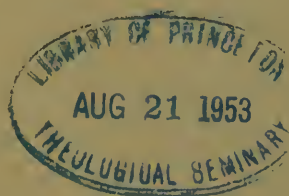


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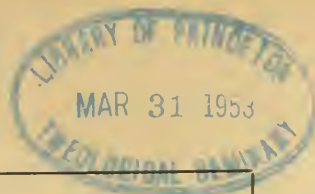
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by
BISHOP G. M. MATHEWS, D.D.



The Foreign Missionary Society
United Brethren in Christ
Dayton, Ohio

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Report of an Episcopal Visit to Porto Rico

By Bishop G. M. Mathews, D.D.

To the Board of Directors of the Foreign Missionary Society:

During last January and part of February I visited our mission in Porto Rico. I was accompanied by Mrs. Mathews, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Caldwell, Miss Nelle Reed, and Miss Blanche Bickel, who rendered great encouragement to the workers in the Mission. I beg leave to submit the following report of the facts gathered and the impressions received:

Porto Rico is unique in being our nearest foreign Mission. It is practically a foreign field in the homeland. All the leaders in that island with whom I conferred agreed that the customs, traditional beliefs, and degradation of the Porto Ricans put them in a position of the greatest need of the gospel. The proximity of the island, and the close relationship to the States through commercial intercourse and religious interest, bring to us at home corresponding opportunity and responsibility. The Spanish language adds to the difficulty of the work. In some cases the foreign board, in other cases the home board directs the missionary enterprise, so that we have in Porto Rico the unusual situation of American home and foreign missionary societies engaged in the same noble work. This situation greatly pleased me as an illustration of the divine oneness of the Christian missions.

There are 1,200,000 inhabitants in Porto Rico, the large majority of whom live in the rural districts and know little or nothing of Christ's real redemptive work.

Door of Religious Opportunity Wide Open.

Until fourteen years ago, Spain, in conjunction with the Roman Catholic Church, had kept the door closed against other nations and religions. Her exclusiveness, in its spirit and enforcement, was equal to that of ancient Judaism; no independence or religious liberty was allowed. Behind that closed door were Spanish tyranny and ecclesiastical oppression, which kept the people in abject poverty, dense ignorance, and social degradation; but God, in his providence, opened that closed door in 1898, when the island passed into the hands of the United States government. The people, weary of Spanish injustice and priesthood degeneracy, were ready and waiting for Protestant Christianity, so that now the

leading citizens, as a rule, actually hate the Catholic Church, and the mass of the people are hungry for the gospel and the Christ.

This is the day of opportunity for the evangelization of Porto Rico and the educational, social, moral, and religious transformation of the people of that interesting island. Even Catholicism has been deeply stirred by the aggressiveness and success of the missionaries, and is now trying to reform herself. The sooner we evangelize Porto Rico with the gospel and win the people to Christ, the more surely will Porto Rico be free from the tightening grasp of Catholicism and be able to propagate the Christian religion to the islands that sit by her side.

Inspection of the Field.

During my visit it was both my pleasure and profit to see much of the island. Railroads, automobiles, coaches transport one over the great roadways, along which are towns, villages, and playas; but it requires much walking and riding on Porto Rican horses to witness the phases of life in mountain barrios. A visitor may travel only over the magnificent thoroughfares of the island and stop at the cities, as some have done, and get no idea of the real situation of the multitudes. I rode with our mission workers for days up into the mountains and down to the playas, where I preached in chapels and got an impression of the Christians in worship, as well as the needs and degradation of the lower classes. A like condition of physical and social degradation appeared in the back streets of the cities. One night I accompanied Mr. Drury to one of the densely populated portions of the city of Ponce, where his men's Bible class held a religious service in the presence of poor ignorant people, who pressed to the door and strained their necks to hear the gospel in sermon and song. To appreciate fully the needs and appealing condition of the people, one must visit the island in person.

There are Protestant churches in every city and town on the island; also in the mountains are many chapels and many private homes where Sunday schools are held and the gospel preached. Progress in the way of sanitation, public school education, dispensaries, and hospitals is evident. I found these improvements to be real accessories to the work of the missionary. Indeed, the work of the missionary would be doubly difficult without the above-named supplemental conditions. While the evangelization of Porto Rico can, of course, never be accomplished without the direct preaching of Christ and his gospel, yet the Christian teacher, the Christian doctor, and the Christian business man are very helpful

in reënforcing the missionaries and in laying foundations for permanent success.

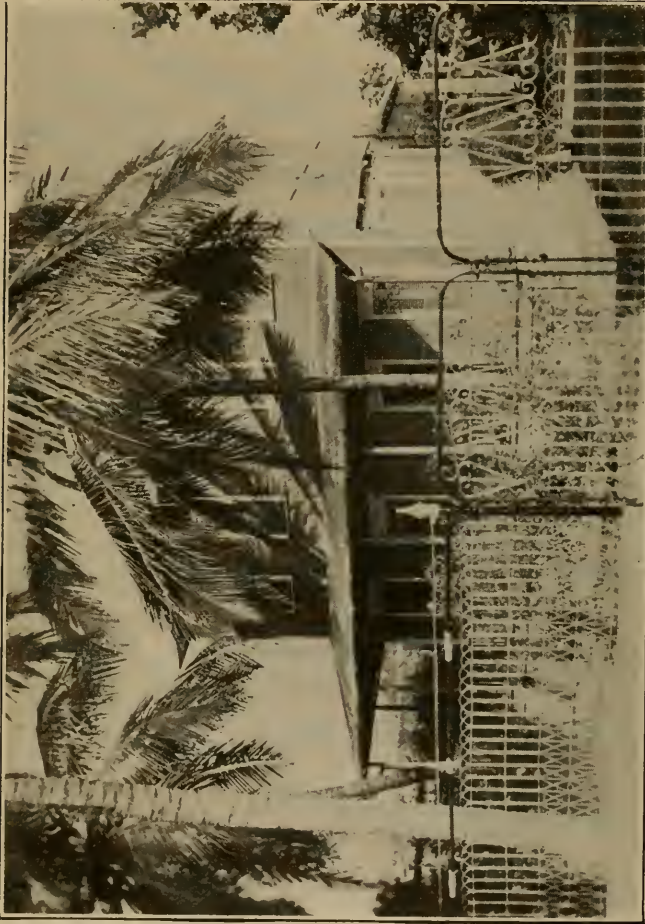
One of the shameful influences that operates to the detriment and difficulty of the Christian worker in Porto Rico now, is the fact that so many godless Americans, who are there for mercenary purposes only, represent in their lives low moral and social ideals; but the successes outweigh the discouragements by far, during the thirteen years of missionary operation. The religious statistics of the evangelical missions of the island, gathered up to January 1, 1911, show 179 pastors, 150 assistants, 186 church organizations, 280 Bible schools with 15,149 scholars, 132 church houses and chapels with 11,359 members in full communion, the value of church property being \$682,987.

OUR OWN MISSION.

The location of our mission in the southern part of the island, with its headquarters at Ponce, is most excellent. It is probably the most compact mission field on the island. Besides Ponce, a city of 30,000 inhabitants, our mission includes the towns of Yauco, Juana Diaz, Penuelas, and Guayanilla. These constitute the five districts under the superintendency of Rev. P. W. Drury, including contiguous rural territory, in which are many chapels and other places where our American and native workers hold services. Ten years ago, Rev. N. H. Huffman was our only missionary on the island. We had no property, no buildings, no organization, no annual conference. Now we have 9 American missionaries, 18 Porto Rican preachers and deaconesses, 15 organized churches, 32 other preaching places, 30 Sunday schools, with an enrollment of 1,538, and 1,066 members in full communion, besides about 500 who are candidates being trained for full membership. The value of our church property is \$40,000. The total contributions for the past year from our churches in Porto Rico was \$2,197.81, an increase of \$446.

Early in the year a site for our mission headquarters at Ponce was purchased at a cost of \$3,000. It is situated near our church, on the same street. Then, with the \$2,500 granted by the Board, a neat, commodious residence was erected on that site. It has nine full rooms, with modern conveniences. Our printing plant, also, is on the new premises. Its lawn is full of palms, roses, and foliage plants. It is the best missionary residence in the city, and gives us fine prestige and influence. The plant is ideal, and, with our church, gives us a property worth at least \$10,000.

In order to save our splendid church property at Juana Diaz from being encroached upon by a business house, Rev. I. E. Caldwell, the pastor, by the generous and timely aid of



U. B. Headquarters, Ponce, Porto Rico.

his brother, Mr. S. C. Caldwell, of Swanton, Nebraska, purchased the home on the corner next to our church at a cost of about \$2,100. It is a large, commodious home for the pastor and his family, and worth more than it cost them. Our mission should have it as a parsonage, and buy it as a matter of self protection.

We have a charming rest home, the Mt. Hermon Cottage, situated 2,000 feet above the Caribbean Sea, in the mountains, twelve miles from Ponce, on the fine roadway to Arecibo. It was erected with the contributions from the Woman's Missionary Association of our Church. It is the best and most delightful investment I ever saw for the sum of \$1,000. It was our privilege to spend a few days in that health-restoring mountain home, with its exhilarating atmosphere and beautiful scenery.

There are two dispensaries under the auspices of our mission. The one is at Yauco, in connection with Rev. N. H. Huffman's pastorate; the other at Coto Laurel, under the direction of Superintendent Drury. Hundreds of afflicted men, women, and children come to those dispensaries for physical help and relief. Christian physicians from the States give their services free, and special funds are provided on the island without any expense to the mission. This method of medical missionary work, in which the hearts of the people are won to Christ and the Church through the power of practical Christianity, greatly commends itself to all broad Christian workers.

Annual Conference.

It was my privilege to preside over the Annual Conference, January 12-14, at Ponce. I received a royal welcome from all the workers. The attendance was large and the interest high to the end. The spirit of enthusiasm, fellowship, and aggressive action prevailed throughout the sessions. The addresses of Superintendent Drury and all the American and native workers were of high order, and were worthy of an Annual Conference of our Church in the States. Though spoken in Spanish, they were all translated to me in English.

Our American missionaries, P. W. Drury and wife, N. H. Huffman and wife, I. E. Caldwell and wife, C. I. Mohler and wife, and Miss Elizabeth Reed, are all persons of fine character and excellent ability; graduates of college and dedicated to the cause of Christ in their field, they have no superiors on the island. They profoundly impressed me as men and women of God, rich in experience, mighty in the Word, and heroic in their passion to win the people to Christ and a better life.

The native workers are also consecrated, loyal Christians. They are intelligent, efficient preachers and deaconesses. Many of them have been trained in the high schools of Porto Rico, and therefore command the respect of the public. The church houses and chapels are all well constructed and kept clean, neat, and attractive.

Both the American and native missionaries are hard, self-sacrificing workers. Every day in the week they visit in the cities and ride over the rough mountain sides to preach in chapels and carry the gospel into private homes.

I commend the economical way in which our mission is conducted. The Annual Conference set the goal this year for 1,000 souls for Christ. The workers went forth with a passion to achieve this result. Word from the superintendent brings the news that already 350 persons have accepted Christ, and the revival is still in progress.

It is with regret that I have to report the enforced return of the wife of Rev. N. H. Huffman to the States on account of the illness of their son, Harold. The Huffmans have a great influence on the island, and would be seriously missed if compelled to withdraw permanently. Let the Board pray for the recovery of the son, so that Mrs. Huffman may rejoin her husband in the great work he is doing.

MISSIONARY COMITY.

I found a general agreement and coöperation upon the part of the evangelical denominations operating missions on the island. All the cities are open to any denomination; but the general division of the territory is as follows: The Presbyterians occupy the west portion; United Brethren in Christ the adjoining territory, with Ponce as headquarters; Methodists and Baptists in the central portion; Congregationalists the east, and the Lutherans on the north. There is also an Interdenominational Council, which encourages general fraternization and coöperation.

It is clear in Porto Rico that a united Catholicism has the advantage over a divided Protestantism, and the sectarian divisions are an element of weakness in all missionary enterprise. Dr. Howard B. Grose, who made a careful survey of the missionary outlook of Porto Rico, expresses it in a nutshell, "A united Porto Rico Protestantism is the only force that can successfully oppose the Catholic Church and redeem the island."

I was charged by your Board to negotiate with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists respecting a closer federation with our denomination in regard to a union printing plant and a union theological seminary. I am happy to report favorable results from that conference. The three

denominations have practically agreed upon the union printing plant. Superintendent Drury and I had a conference with the Presbyterians at Mayaguez in regard to these two propositions. It was a most delightful and harmonious interview. The Presbyterians and United Brethren have agreed upon the printing plant, and the Congregationalists on the field have also approved it. The plan will be submitted to the denominational boards for final approval.

The union printing plant is assured now. The new paper will be a bi-weekly publication of sixteen pages, printed at Ponce, with Mr. Drury as general editor and manager, and with associate editors from the other two denominations. The subscription price will be fifty cents per annum. It is expected to have 3,000 subscribers and become self-supporting within a year. Already our printing plant has been enlarged for that purpose. The Presbyterians have suspended their paper and, awaiting the completion of details, we are sending our publication, *El Testigo Evangelico*, to their subscribers.

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

The following plan for the proposed Union Theological Seminary has been agreed upon by the representatives of the Presbyterians and United Brethren missions, and taken into consideration by some of the brethren of the Congregational Mission. The latter are not quite ready to take action; but the Presbyterians and United Brethren are fully agreed upon the desirability and necessity of such a school for the training of our native workers.

I recommend that this Board at this session take action authorizing the consummation of this proposed school with the Presbyterians as soon as possible, either with or without the coöperation of the Congregationalists. The school property would be held jointly. Our share of responsibility would be no more than \$4,000 in cash and the furnishing of one of our missionaries as a member of the faculty, giving half of his time to that work. In the meantime the Presbyterians have generously agreed to receive our native workers into their school for training until this union enterprise shall be consummated. Such a union training school as is proposed is a great necessity for all native workers on the island. It would be both in the interest of economy and broad missionary federation. I give below the general statement of the plan agreed upon by the missionary authorities in Porto Rico, and endorsed by myself as your representative:

Purpose.

The purpose is to found a Christian training school which will be devoted exclusively to training for Christian work.

Owing to peculiar conditions which now prevail, provisions for studies of a preliminary character must be made for some time; but it is expected that later on these may be pursued in the high schools or other institutions of Porto Rico.

Location.

The training school will be located at Mayaguez.

Building.

It is proposed that a suitable building be erected at a cost not to exceed \$12,000, including grounds and furnishings. In view of the size of the Presbyterian Mission and, further, in view of the use the Presbyterians in Cuba may make of the school, it is suggested that the amount necessary be apportioned as may be agreed upon. This property will be of joint ownership, and will be under the control of a board composed of representatives from each denomination.

Board of Directors.

The school will be under the direction of a Board of Directors composed of members of the missions concerned. The board will meet annually for the transaction of business.

Current Expenses.

The expenses incident to the maintenance of the school will be apportioned as may be mutually agreed.

Course of Study.

This will be of three years' duration.

Mutual Relations.

In order to preserve the greatest harmony among the missions concerned and also in order to maintain an effective discipline, it is mutually agreed that—

1. There shall be no attempt to influence students in the least to change denominational beliefs and practices.
2. No person in attendance at the seminary, or one who has attended the same, will be employed under any circumstances by one of the denominations other than the one to which he belongs, except by mutual consent of the denominations concerned.

ANOTHER OPEN DOOR.

Superintendent Drury and Rev. N. H. Huffman last September visited Santo Domingo, and found there a door which God has evidently opened to the Christian missionary. The island is only fifty-five miles from Porto Rico, a few hours'

ride from Mayaguez. It has a population of 600,000. Its territory is eight times the size of Porto Rico. The people are as needy of the gospel as the Porto Ricans, and wholly unevangelized. The urgency for entering that open door at once rests upon the following arguments:

1. Its close proximity to Porto Rico, being but fifty-five miles away.

2. Its need of the gospel.

3. Fifteen thousand Porto Ricans are living on that island now. In ten or fifteen years, according to the present rate of increase, the population of Porto Rico will reach two millions, which will be beyond its supporting resources and opportunities. Emigration will become a necessity, and the outflow will naturally be to Santo Domingo, where their kindred have settled. It is easy even now to interest Christian Porto Ricans in the evangelization of that island. Some are always offering their services as missionaries.

4. This open door can be more economically entered from Porto Rico rather than directly from the States. It can easily be under the administration of our Superintendent in Porto Rico. It would simply widen our field in the Antilles, with the addition at present of one more missionary, and probably a trained consecrated Porto Rican.

5. Last, but not least, is the argument of an objective. Everything is favorable for the complete evangelization of Porto Rico at no distant day. For self-preservation and the maintenance of the spiritual results of the investment of personality, sacrifice, and money put into Porto Rico, there must be a commanding objective. This new field would furnish it. The outflow of Christian life in that land must be as unselfish as it is in any Christian country under the law of divine love.

Our Porto Rico Annual Conference last January requested this Board to take action toward the starting of missionary operations in Santo Domingo, pledging itself to pay \$500 during the year, beginning with January, 1913, "providing that the Board deems it possible and wise to open up work there next year." I recommend this challenge to the serious and prayerful consideration of this Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. A general appropriation of \$20,000 for Porto Rico, in view of money needed to place native Christian workers into unoccupied territory, and the high cost of living in the cities.

2. **New Churches:** A new church at Yauco, costing at least \$7,000, to be built immediately.

A new chapel at Villalba, to be built at once, costing not less than \$1,500. This is an imperative necessity.

The private house occupied by the missionary and family at Juana Diaz should be bought soon for a parsonage.

The Juana Diaz church is too small for its congregation, and needs an addition, at a cost of \$2,500.

Three hundred dollars appropriated for a site in Sabanetas, and the enlargement of our chapel.

3. A new mission established in Ponce as our Second Church, under the direction of our First Church. We have a fine opening there, where thousands are still unchurched. With the help of work-

ers from our First Church, \$600 would probably support this new mission for this year.

4. Lengthened term of service of our American missionaries. In view of the reinvigorating advantages of our Rest Home near Ponce, I endorse the recommendation of the Mission Council for the extension of their term of service to four years.

5. The endorsement of the Union Printing Plant proposition.

6. The favorable consideration of the proposed Union Theological Seminary at Mayaguez, with general definite instructions to the executive committee of this Board looking to the final consummation.

7. A prayerful, serious consideration of the Santo Domingo open door as a challenge for missionary extension.

I close by expressing my profound appreciation of the prayers, sympathy, and help of our Church, both in Porto Rico and in the States. I am grateful to God for the marvelous preservation of our lives on the sea, and for whatever helpful service we were enabled to perform for our noble heroic workers on that interesting island.

Respectfully submitted,

G. M. MATHEWS.

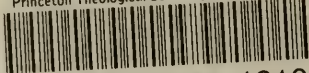
N. B.—The Foreign Mission Board at its annual session at Harrisburg, Pa., May 6-9, 1912, unanimously approved the recommendations of the foregoing report.

DATE DUE

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